

SEGMENTAL PHONOLOGY OF MAITHILI URDU

(A LESSER KNOWN LANGUAGE SPOKEN IN THE NORTHERN DISTRICTS OF BIHAR)

M J Warsi

Department of Linguistics, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh (UP), India

ABSTRACT – This paper on the Mithilanchal Urdu, a dialect of the Indo-Aryan language family, would be an interesting study in the time of the Corona Pandemic, as it may be considered a minority language or dialect and such languages and dialects have been found to be especially vulnerable in the times of calamities like the present COVID-19 pandemic. However, this paper would basically provide a baseline upon which post-pandemic studies can be based for exploring the effect of the pandemic. The present study reflects the segmental phonology of Maithili Urdu, a dialect of the Indo-Aryan language family, spoken mainly in the Mithilanchal region of the state of Bihar in India. Maithili Urdu does not have its own script or literature, yet it has maintained an oral history over many centuries. It has contributed in enriching the Maithili, Hindi and Urdu language and literature very profoundly. There are ten vowels in Maithili Urdu. It would be very interesting to know that out of these, there are four front vowels, four back vowels, and two central vowels. Lip rounding is not distinctive, but only the back vowels are rounded. Out of these ten vowels, three are short and seven are long. Length, thus, is a distinctive feature in Maithili Urdu, where short and long vowels show full phonological opposition in all positions. These are all pure vowels, non-nasalized. All vowels in Maithili Urdu can be nasalized. Consonantal phonemes in Maithili Urdu show four-way contrast between voiceless and voiced and unaspirated and aspirated at bilabial, dental, retroflex, palatal, velar, and glottal places of articulation. Phonetically, affricates also behave like stops. Similarly, the taps, laterals, and nasals also show a two-way contrast between unaspirated and aspirated. Aspiration, thus, is an overriding characteristic of the Maithili Urdu sound system. This study has greatly benefited from the similar work done by Dixit, 1963; Halle & Mohannan 1985; Masud Husain Khan, 1986; Hyman, 2003. In this paper, a brief overview of segmental phonology of Maithili Urdu will be presented wherein vowels and consonants and their phonotactic behavior will be described in detail.

Key words: *Biolinguistic diversity, Language Acquisition, Language Transmission, Linguistics Domains.*

I. INTRODUCTION

The present work is a grammatical description of Mithilanchal Urdu, a dialect of the Indo-Aryan language family, spoken by around twenty percent speakers mainly in the Mithilanchal region of the state of Bihar in India. Besides, it is also spoken by a majority of the Mithilanchal diaspora community. Very rich in literary style, Mithilanchal Urdu has maintained a literary history over many decades. It has contributed in enriching the Hindi and Urdu language and literature very profoundly.

II. Geography

Mithilanchal is the historic name for the large area of Bihar that includes roughly present day Rajsamand, Bhilwara, Udaipur, and Chittaurgarh districts of Rajasthan state of India. Mithilanchal region lies across the Aravalli mountain range to the northwest; Ajmer lies to the north; Wagar region of

Rajasthan and Gujarat lies to the south; Malwa region of Madhya Pradesh state lies to the southeast; and the Harauti region of Rajasthan lies to the east. The northern part of Mithilanchal is a gently sloping plain, drained by the Banas river and its tributaries, which empty northwest into the Chambal river, a tributary of the Yamuna river. The southern part of the region is hilly and marks the divide between the Banas and its tributaries and the headwaters of the Sabarmati and Mahi rivers and their tributaries, which drain south into the Gulf of Cambay through Gujarat state.

Mithilanchal has a tropical climate. Rainfall averages 660 millimeter per annum and is generally higher in the southwest and lower in the northeast of the region. Over ninety percent of the rain typically falls between June to September every year, during the southwest monsoon. The region is part of the Kathiawar-Gir dry deciduous forests' eco-region. Protected areas include the Jaisamand Wildlife Sanctuary, the

Kumbhalgarh Wildlife Sanctuary, the Bassi Wildlife Sanctuary and the Sitamata Game Sanctuary.

III. Sociolinguistic data

The term “Mithilanchal Urdu” literally refers to someone who hails from or is an inhabitant of the Mithilanchal region in Rajasthan. Mithilanchal Urdu people prefer to speak Mithilanchal Urdu dialect of Rajasthani, but nowadays Hindi is gradually replacing Rajasthani as it is the medium of instruction at all levels. Moreover, one will find English speakers in all the major cities and in remote villages too.

Hinduism is the main religion of Mithilanchal region and other significant religious groups in this area are the Jains and the Muslims. There are many local folk heroes and local deities.

IV. Existing research

Though Mithilanchal Urdu had contributed profoundly to Rajasthani literature in medieval periods, however extensive linguistic research work has not been conducted on it. Some native scholars have done research on its word lists and there is scanty work on phonology. However, the work done by Yadav 2011; Ohala Manjari, 1991; Chomsky and Halle, 1968 are of great importance. In addition, sketches of its morphology and syntax are found in some texts and monographs.

V. Vowels

There are ten vowels in Mithilanchal Urdu. Out of these, there are four front vowels, four back vowels, and two central vowels (see Table 1). Lip rounding is not distinctive, but only the back vowels are rounded. Out of these ten vowels, three are short and seven are long. Length, thus, is a distinctive feature in Mithilanchal Urdu, where short and long vowels show full phonological opposition in all positions.

Table 1: Vowels in Mithilanchal Urdu

Vowels	Front	Central	Back
High	i		u
Low-High	I		ʊ
Mid	e	ə	o
Low	æ	a	ɔ

These are all pure vowels, non-nasalized. All vowels in Mithilanchal Urdu can be nasalized. To each vowel, there corresponds a nasalized counterpart (see 1.1.9).

1. Front vowels

The phonological contrast between the front vowels /i, ɪ, e, æ/ is shown below at all levels:

Table 2: Front vowels

Initial	Medial	Final
iman ‘faith’	ʈʰik ‘correct’	sərkari ‘official’
islam ‘Islam’	bəhɪn ‘sister’	ruʈi ‘interest’
ek ‘one’	gen ‘ball’	ke ‘who’
æb ‘defect’	pær ‘foot’	hæ ‘is’

2. Central vowels

The central vowels /ə, a/ show full phonological contrast at all levels:

Initial	Medial	Final
əb ‘now’	əmən ‘peace’	mənə ‘mind’
alu ‘potato’	kɪtab ‘book’	dana ‘grain’
əkʰbar ‘newspaper’	kəm ‘less’	rəhəmə ‘mercy’
ap ‘you’	məkan ‘building’	məhɪna ‘month’

3. Back vowels

The back vowels /u, ʊ, o, ɔ/ are rounded and show phonological opposition in all positions:

Initial	Medial	Final
un ‘wool’	kəsʊr ‘fault’	ʃʰaʊ ‘broom’
ostad ‘teacher’	k ʊs ‘grass’	s ʊr ʊ ‘beginning’
okra ‘his/her’	ʃor ‘force’	koro ‘bamboo’
ɔs ‘dew’	Foʃ ‘army’	so ‘hundred’

4. High vowels

The high vowels /i, u/ contrast in all positions:

Initial	Medial	Final
inam ‘reward’	ʈʰik ‘correct’	moʈi ‘cobbler’
upər ‘above’	kʰun ‘blood’	babu ‘clerk’
id ‘Eid’	məhin ‘fine’	bɪʃli ‘electricity’
udʰar ‘loan’	nakʰun ‘nail’	ləhu ‘blood’

5. Low-high vowels

The low-high vowels /I, u/ contrast at all positions, but occur rarely at word-final position:

Initial	Medial	Final
ɪ 'this'	kɪ 'what'	ruɪ 'interest'
ɪslam 'Islam'	mɪstri 'mechanic'	rɪsɪ 'hermit'
ʊdʰər 'that side'	bəhʊt 'much'	sʊrʊ 'beginning'
ʊllu 'owl'	rʊpya 'rupee'	pəsʊ 'animal'

6. Mid vowels

The mid vowels /e, ə, o/ show phonological contrast in all positions:

Initial	Medial	Final
ek 'one'	Mej 'table'	kəmre 'rooms'
əb 'now'	kəm 'less'	mənə 'mind'
okra 'his/her'	mor 'peacock'	do 'two'

7. Low vowels

The low vowels /æ, a, ɔ/ show phonological contrasts at all positions:

Initial	Medial	Final
æb 'defect'	kæsa 'how'	hæ 'is'
as 'hope'	bʰai 'brother'	əbba 'father'
ɔr 'and'	kən 'who'	sɔ 'hundred'

B. Vowel length

There are three pairs of short and long vowels in Mithilanchal Urdu: /ɪ/ and /i/; /ʊ/ and /u/; and /ə/ and /a/. They show full phonological contrast at all—initial, medial, and final—positions, but short vowels generally occur at less frequently at final position. The following words illustrate the length contrast between short and long vowels at initial and medial positions:

1. Initial

Short vowel	Long vowel
ɪ 'this'	iman 'faith'
ʊllu 'owl'	un 'wool'
əb 'now'	alu 'potato'

2. Medial

Short vowel	Long vowel
jəhl 'ignorant'	jəmir 'self-respect'
bəhʊt 'much'	mənʃur 'agree'
wəhəm 'doubt'	asman 'sky'

3. Final

Short vowel	Long vowel
Bəstɪ 'locality'	Sərɪ 'winter'
gʊrʊ 'teacher'	abəru 'dignity'
mənə 'mind'	məhɪna 'month'

C. Nasalized vowels

Vowel nasality is distinctive in Mithilanchal Urdu. The contrast between oral and nasalized vowels at initial, medial, and final position is shown below:

1. Initial

Oral	Nasalized
idʰər 'this way'	it̤ 'brick'
ɪsmət 'dignity'	ič̤ 'inch'
ek 'one'	ẽt̤ʰən 'twisting'
æb 'defect'	æ̃nək 'eye glasses'
əb 'now'	ə̃gur 'grape'
at̤a 'flour'	āk̤h 'eye'
uṭʰ 'get up' (imp)	ūt̤ 'camel'
ʊmər 'age'	ōh 'sarcasm'
Okəra 'his/her'	ōs 'ounce'
ɔrət 'woman'	ʒd̤ʰa 'upside down'

2. Medial

Oral		Nasalized	
čita	‘tiger’	čiṭi	‘ant’
čishti	‘sage’	čigari	‘spark’
peṭ	‘stomach’	pēṭr	‘painter’
Pæsa	‘money’	pæda	‘bottom’
bæs	‘bus’	bæd	‘closed’
čadər	‘shawl’	čād	‘moon’
dur	‘far’	pəhūčna	‘to reach’
khos	‘happy’	khōkhar	‘blood thirsty’
mor	‘peacock’	ghōču	‘stupid’
mosəm	‘weather’	bhōh	‘eyebrow’

3. Final

Oral		Nasalized	
dəhi	‘yogurt’	nəhī	‘not’
ručī	‘interest’	ṛamī	‘land’
kəmrə	‘rooms’	kitabē	‘books’
mæ	‘alcohol’	mæ	‘I’
bədə	‘bad’	bədə	‘body’
kəha	‘said’	kəhā	‘where’
ləhu	‘blood’	gehū	‘wheat’
bəhə	‘wife’	kʰə	‘blood’
do	‘two’	donə	‘both’
lə	‘flame’	bʰə	‘eyebrow’

VI. Consonants

There are three notions that help distinguish one sound from another in describing the consonant sounds of Mithilanchal Urdu. They are:

- place of articulation
- manner of articulation, and
- voicing.

Mithilanchal Urdu consonantal phonemes are described in terms of the following articulatory features: (i) Labial position (ii) Dental position (iii) Palatal position (iv) Velar position (v)

Glottal position (vi) Closure (vii) Trill (viii) Frictionless aperture (ix) Lateral opening (x) Retroflexion (xi) Nasality (xii) Voicing, and (xiii) Aspiration. The consonantal phonemes are seen in Table 2.

Table 2: Consonants in Mithilanchal Urdu

	Bilabial	Dental	Retroflex	Palatal	Velar	Glottal
Stops						
<i>Voiceless unaspirated</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>ṭ</i>	<i>č</i>	<i>k</i>	
<i>Voiceless aspirated</i>	<i>p^h</i>	<i>t^h</i>	<i>ṭ^h</i>	<i>č^h</i>	<i>k^h</i>	
<i>Voiced unaspirated</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>d</i>	<i>ḍ</i>	<i>ḷ</i>	<i>g</i>	
<i>Voiced aspirated</i>	<i>b^h</i>	<i>d^h</i>	<i>ḍ^h</i>	<i>ḷ^h</i>	<i>g^h</i>	
Nasals	<i>m</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>[ṇ]</i>	<i>[ɲ]</i>	<i>[ŋ]</i>	
Fricatives						
<i>Voiceless</i>		<i>s</i>				
<i>Voiced</i>						<i>h</i>
Laterals		<i>l</i>				
Trill		<i>r</i>				
Frictionless continuants	<i>w</i>			<i>y</i>		

A. Description of individual consonantal phonemes with allophonic variations

There are 28 consonantal phonemes in Mithilanchal Urdu that show four-way contrast between voiceless vs. voiced and unaspirated vs. aspirated at bilabial, dental, retroflex, palatal, velar, and glottal places of articulation. Aspiration is an overriding characteristic of the Mithilanchal Urdu sound system. Description of each consonant phoneme is given below:

1. Stops

/p/ voiceless unaspirated bilabial stop are not fully released in the final position:

Initial	Medial	Final
pəhla 'first'	upər 'above'	sāp 'snake'
pas 'near'	məkan 'building'	pap 'sin'

/p^h/ voiceless aspirated bilabial stop are not fully released in the final position:

Initial	Medial	Final
p ^h əkīr 'beggar'	līp ^h ap ^h a 'paper bag'	
p ^h altu 'useless'	sīp ^h ər 'zero'	

/b/ voiced unaspirated bilabial stop are fully released in all positions:

Initial	Medial	Final
bīstər 'bedding'	nəbəj 'vein'	
bīna 'without'	həbət 'anxiety'	

/b^h/ voiced aspirated bilabial stop does not occur fully aspirated in the final position:

Initial	Medial	Final
b ^h ai 'brother'	g ^h əb ^h rah t 'concern'	
b ^h er 'sheep'	ləgb ^h əg 'approximately'	

/t/ voiceless unaspirated dental stop:

Initial	Medial	Final
tanga 'cart'	k ^h ətəm 'finish'	
tərkari 'vegetable'	pəta 'address'	

/t^h/ voiceless aspirated dental stop occurs less aspirated in the final position:

Initial	Medial	Final
t ^h ali 'plate'	pətt ^h ər 'stone'	hat ^h 'hand'
t ^h əppər 'slap'	nətt ^h oni 'nose ring'	sat ^h 'together'

/d/ voiced unaspirated stop:

Initial	Medial	Final
dīn 'day'	kōdrət 'nature'	
do 'two'	bədən 'body'	

/dh/ voiced aspirated dental stop is less aspirated in the final position:

Initial	Medial	Final
d ^h ərna 'picketing'	čōd ^h ri 'headman'	bōd ^h 'Wednesday'
d ^h ok ^h a 'betrayal'	ənd ^h era 'darkness'	əwəd ^h 'an area'
sap ^h 'clean'	bərp ^h 'ice'	

/t/ voiceless unaspirated retroflex stop:

Initial	Medial	Final
tokri 'basket'	Mətər 'peas'	bat 'weight'
təttu 'pony'	təmatər 'tomato'	k ^h ot 'defect'

/h/ voiceless unaspirated retroflex stop:

Initial	Medial	Final
hīsab 'calculation'	əngu ^h a 'thumb'	a ^h 'eight'
gərio 'poor'	Kə ^h īnai 'difficulty'	sa ^h 'sixty'

/d/ voiced unaspirated retroflex stop:

Initial	Medial	Final
dəra 'house'	laḍla 'adorable'	laḍ 'affection'
dənda 'stick'	liḍər 'leader'	kaḍ 'card'

/d^h/ voiced aspirated retroflex stop occurs less aspirated in the final position:

Initial	Medial	Final
d ^h ila 'loose'	pəḍ ^h ai 'study'	baḍ ^h 'flood'
d ^h əkkən 'lid'	bəḍ ^h ai 'carpenter'	Gəḍ ^h 'fort'

/č/ voiceless unaspirated palatal stop:

Initial	Medial	Final
čar 'four'	pəčas 'fifty'	kanč 'glass'
čawəl 'rice'	ləčək 'flexibility'	səč 'true'

/g/ voiced unaspirated velar stop:

Initial	Medial	Final
gajər 'carrot'	məgər 'if'	ag 'fire'
gərib 'poor'	lFgan 'tax'	rog 'disease'

/čʰ/ voiceless aspirated palatal stop:

Initial	Medial	Final
čʰata 'umbrella'	məčʰəli 'fish'	gačʰ 'tree'
čʰati 'chest'	kəčʰova 'tortoise'	Kočʰ 'some'

/gʰ/ voiced aspirated velar stop occurs less aspirated in middle and final positions:

Initial	Medial	Final
gʰər 'house'	bəgʰarna 'seasoning'	bagʰ 'tiger'
gʰəŋgʰor 'overwhelming'	bəgʰər 'homeless'	sīgʰ 'lion'

/j/ voiced unaspirated palatal stop:

Initial	Medial	Final
jal 'net'	gajər 'carrot'	raj 'regime'
jadu 'magic'	kʰojli 'itching'	aɟ 'today'

B. Nasals

/m/ voiced bilabial nasal:

Initial	Medial	Final
məgər 'but'	bimari 'disease'	dam 'price'
mela 'fair'	kəmra 'room'	kam 'work'

/jʰ/ voiced aspirated palatal stop occurs less aspirated in middle and final position:

Initial	Medial	Final
jʰola 'bag'	manjʰi 'boatman'	səməjʰ 'understanding'
jʰaru 'broom'	səməjʰdar 'wise'	bojʰ 'load'

/k/ voiceless unaspirated velar stop:

Initial	Medial	Final
kəb 'when'	nəkər 'servant'	
kam 'work'	tokri 'basket'	

/kʰ/ voiceless aspirated velar stop:

Initial	Medial	Final
kʰərab 'bad'	likʰna 'to write'	ākʰ 'eye'
kʰana 'food'	rəkʰəwali 'vigil'	rakʰ 'ash'

/n/ voiced nasal. It has four allophones: [ŋ], [ɳ], [ɲ], and [ɳ]

[ŋ] velar nasal occurs only before velar stops:

kələŋk 'blemish'	rəŋg 'colour'
rəŋk 'poor'	qʰəŋg 'manner'
əŋkʰ 'eye'	Kəŋgʰa 'comb'
ɳəŋkʰ 'feather'	ɳəŋgʰ 'thigh'
nəmək 'salt'	

[ɳ] palatal nasal occurs only before palatal stops:

paɳc 'five'	gəɳja 'bald'
kaɳč 'glass'	pəɳja 'claw'
riɳčʰ 'bear'	maɳjʰi 'boatman'
muɳčʰ 'moustache'	baɳjʰ 'barren'

[ɳ] retroflex nasal occurs only before retroflex stops:

ɳɳt 'brick'	əɳɳa 'egg'
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b ^h əŋt̪	‘meeting’	t̪əŋda	‘cold’
gaŋt̪	‘knot’	meŋd̪ək	‘frog’
Kəŋt̪	‘throat’	muŋd̪	‘root’

[n] dental nasal occurs in all other environments:

Initial	Medial	Final
nak ‘nose’	pənir ‘cheese’	d ^h an ‘grain’
nəmək ‘salt’	kɪnara ‘edge’	kan ‘ear’

C. Fricatives

/s/ a voiceless dental fricative occurs in all environments:

Initial	Medial	Final
səlam ‘greetings’	kɪsan ‘farmer’	malɪs ‘massage’
sat ‘seven’	məsala ‘spice’	dəs ‘ten’

/h/ voiceless glottal fricative occurs in all environments. Though, it is always released initially, but medially and finally it is not fully released:

Initial	Medial	Final
həm ‘we’	bahər ‘out’	rəh ‘soul’
hajri ‘attendance’	məhəl ‘palace’	bāh ‘arm’

D. Laterals

/l/ voiced dental lateral occurs in all positions:

Initial	Medial	Final
Log ‘people’	palək ‘spinach’	gal ‘cheek’
lal ‘red’	halət ‘condition’	čul ‘hair’

E. Trill

/r/ voiced dental alveolar trill occurs in all positions:

Initial	Medial	Final
rəs ‘juice’	sərdi ‘cold’	dər ‘fear’
raja ‘king’	nərəm ‘soft’	g ^h ər ‘house’

F. Frictionless continuants

/w/ voiced labial frictionless continuant occurs in all positions:

Initial	Medial	Final
waste ‘for’	səwal ‘question’	‘boat’ naw
wətən ‘country’	čawəl ‘rice’	g ^h aw ‘wound’

/y/ voiced palatal frictionless continuant occurs in all positions:

Initial	Medial	Final
yad ‘memory’	nəya ‘new’	gay ‘cow’
yar ‘buddy’	təyar ‘ready’	hay ‘oh’

VII. Distribution and contrast

All consonants, except /ŋ, ñ, ɲ/, occur at initial, medial and final positions.

VIII. Contrast of articulation

The examples of contrast of voiceless versus voiced and aspiration versus un-aspirated are given below and these illustrate phonemic contrasts:

IX. Stops

1. Voiceless vs. Voiced

/p : b/

Initial	Medial	Final
pis ‘grind’(imp)	upər ‘above’	jɪp ‘jeep’
bis ‘twenty’	obasi ‘to’	jɪb ‘to’

/p^h : b^h/

Initial	Medial	Final
p ^h ul ‘flower’	səp ^h ai ‘cleanliness’	sap ^h ‘clean’
b ^h ul ‘mistake’	Kəb ^h i ‘sometimes’	əb ^h i ‘now’

/t : d/

Initial	Medial	Final
tən ‘body’	data ‘benefactor’	bat ‘matter’
dəs ‘ten’	dada ‘grandfather’	bad ‘after’

/t^h : d^h/

Initial	Medial	Final
t ^h ən	‘udder’ pə ^h tər	‘stone’ sat ^h
d ^h ən	‘wealth’ məj ^h dər	‘whirlpool’ sad ^h na
,		

/t : d/

Initial	Medial	Final
ta t	‘rug’ Mə ^h tər	‘pea’ ba t
ɔ ^h ali	‘branch’ Gə ^h dəriya	‘shepherd’ laɔ
h’		

/t^h : d^h/

Initial	Medial	Final
t ^h ik	‘corret’ bə ^h tək	‘meeting’ sa ^h t
ɔ ^h ila	‘loose’ mē ^h dək	‘frog’ ba ^h d

/č : j/

Initial	Medial	Final
čor	‘thief’ bə ^h čəpən	‘childhood’ moč
jor	‘force’ gə ^h jər	‘carrot’ a j

/č^h : j^h/

Initial	Medial	Final
č ^h ata	‘umbrel’ Mə ^h čəli	‘fish’ gač ^h
la’		
j ^h a ^h u	‘broom’ məj ^h əli	‘middle’ koč ^h
,		

/k : g/

Initial	Medial	Final
kəm	‘less’ bə ^h kəri	‘goat’ ek
gəli	‘alley’ pə ^h gəri	‘turban’ ag

/k^h : g^h/

Initial	Medial	Final
k ^h ərgos	‘rabbi’ Bə ^h kəan	‘describe’ rak ^h
t’		
g ^h ər	‘house’ Bə ^h gər	‘homeless’ mag ^h
e’		

2. Unaspirated vs. aspirated

/p : p^h/

Initial	Medial	Final
pəlp	‘mome’ sipahisi	‘consta’ kəpsa
həl	‘nt’ p ^h ər	‘ble’ p ^h
	‘fruit’	‘zero’ n’

/b : b^h/

Initial	Medial	Final
bat	‘matter’ k ^h əbər	‘news’ Kəb
b ^h at	‘rice’ Gəmb ^h ir	‘serious’ lob ^h
		‘greed’

/t : t^h/

Initial	Medial	Final
tən	‘body’ pətla	‘thin’ sat
t ^h ən	‘udder’ pət ^h ər	‘stone’ sat ^h
		‘together’

/d : d^h/

Initial	Medial	Final
Do	‘two’ adət	‘habit’ mərd
d ^h ona	‘to wash’ Kɪd ^h ər	‘where’ sind ^h
		‘Sindh’

/t : t^h/

Initial	Medial	Final
ta ^h t	‘rug’ mə ^h tər	‘pea’ pət
t ^h at	‘pomp’ Kət ^h in	‘difficult’ at ^h
		‘eight’

/d : d^h/

Initial	Medial	Final
ɔ ^h ər	‘fear’ liɔ ^h ər	‘leader’ laɔ
ɔ ^h ila	‘loose’ bə ^h dəi	‘carpenter’ baɔ ^h
		‘flood’

/k : k^h/

Initial	Medial	Final
kana	‘one-eyed’ Məkan	‘house’ nak
k ^h ana	‘food’ Mək ^h ən	‘butter’ rak ^h
		‘ash’

/g :gʰ/

Initial	Medial	Final
gər	‘if’	pagəl
gʰFr	‘house’	begʰər
		rog
		‘disease’
		bagʰ
		‘tiger’

/č :čʰ/

Initial	Medial	Final
čača	‘uncle’	Bəčəpən
čhata	‘umbrella’	məčʰli
		‘childhood’
		kāč
		‘glass’
		gačʰ
		‘tree’

/j :jʰ/

Initial	Medial	Final
jal	‘net’	gajər
jʰal	‘burning’	Məjʰəla
		‘middle’
		aĵ
		‘today’
		bojʰ
		‘burden’

Nasals

Nasals /m, n/ show phonological contrast at all positions:

Initial	Medial	Final
mala	‘garland’	jəmana
nala	‘brook’	jənana
		‘time’
		‘woman’
		kam
		‘work’
		kan
		‘ear’

X. Fricatives

Fricatives /s, h/ show phonological contrast at all positions:

Initial	Medial	Final
sər	‘head’	bəsta
hər	‘each’	bəhta
		‘bag’
		‘flowing’
		as
		‘hope’
		ah
		‘sigh’

XI. Frictionless continuants

Frictionless continuants /w, y/ show phonological contrast at all positions:

Initial	Medial	Final
war	‘day’	səwar
yar	‘friend’	Sıyar
		‘rider’
		‘jakal’
		naw
		‘boat’
		hay
		‘oh’

XII. Contrast of manner

A. Stop vs. frictionless continuant: /b : w/

Initial	Medial	Final
bis	‘twenty’	kʰəbər
wəjəh	‘reason’	awaz
		‘news’
		‘voice’
		kFb
		‘when’
		daw
		‘betting’

B. Trill vs. lateral: /r : l/ show phonological contrast at all positions:

Initial	Medial	Final
raĵ	‘secret’	mFrđ
la ĵ	‘shyness’	maĴk
		‘man’
		‘honor’
		Məĵbur
		‘helpless’
		bal
		‘hair’

XIII. Consonantal length

There are two degrees of phonetic length in consonants in Mithilanchal Urdu: (i) simple, and

(ii) geminates. Simple consonants occur in all the positions whereas geminated occur only in the intervocalic position. All the consonants, except /r, y, h/, can occur geminated which occur only after short vowels. Geminates behave like consonant clusters in the syllabic structure of the language; the first half goes with the preceding vowel and the latter half with the following one. The following examples illustrate the contrast between simple and geminate consonants:

/k : kk/

pəka ‘cook’ (imp) pəkka ‘concrete’

/g : gg/

pəka ‘cook’ (imp) Pəkka ‘concrete’

/č : č č/

bəča ‘remained’ Bəčča ‘child’

/j : ĵ/

Səĵa ‘punishment’ Səĵĵa ‘decoration’

/t : tt/

Pəta ‘allure’ (imp) Pətta ‘lease’

/ɖ : ɖɖ/

čəɖ 'climb' (imp) čəɖɖi 'underwear'

/t : tt/

pəta 'address' pətta 'leaf'

čʰət 'roof' čʰətta 'bee-hive'

/d : dd/

Kəd 'height' Kəddu 'pumpkin'

/n : nn/

soni 'heard' sonni 'An Islamic sect'

sunā 'deserted' Sonnah 'Islamic ritual'

XIV. Diphthongs

There are two diphthongs in Mithilanchal Urdu: /əi/ and /əu/. /əi/ is generally pronounced loosely as ə-i, and, /əu/ as ə-u. Mithilanchal Urdu, however, is somewhat tighter in its pronunciation so it depends more or less on the option of the speaker, if s/he contracts /əi/ or /əu/ into a real diphthong or pronounce them separately as two distinct vowels. The process of diphthongization in Mithilanchal Urdu is closely related to vowel clustering. Diphthongs in Mithilanchal Urdu are rising diphthongs, i.e. they end in high vowels /i/ and /u/:

Initial	Medial	Final
əinək 'glasses'	kəisa 'what kind of'	məkai 'maze'
əisa 'like this'	pəisa 'coin'	Wəkai 'really'
əurət 'woman'	pəuna 'quarter'	Ləkʰnəu 'Lucknow city'
əujar 'tools'	səur 'manner'	dəbau 'pressure'

XV. Suprasegmentals

A. Stress

The stress is not an important feature in Mithilanchal Urdu, yet it seems that its existence and phonemic status cannot be ruled out. Stress is utilized in disyllabic syllables to distinguish between grammatical categories. In nouns, stress accent falls on the initial syllable and in the verb category it

falls on the final syllable. The stressed syllable is marked by the symbol [ˈ].

Noun

'bāla 'evil spirit'

'dhila 'loose'

'sila 'complaint'

Verb

bə'la 'call'

hə'la 'shake'

sə'la 'stitch'

Phonetically, stress is employed to express emphasis. The phonetic correlate is the combination of length and pitch. Emphasized syllables contain a greater amount of energy.

B. Juncture

Juncture is also phonemic in Mithilanchal Urdu. This is not audible as a distinct sound but is realized as a gap in speech in a normal or slow speech. The following contrasts establish the juncture phoneme in Mithilanchal Urdu:

(i) /mənana/ 'to convince' /mən+a+na/ 'to be agree + come'

(ii) /pərdesi/ 'stranger' /pər+de+si/ 'curtains + sew (imp.)'

C. Intonation

Accent and stress are not distinctive features in Mithilanchal Urdu. Stress in Mithilanchal Urdu is mainly used for emphasis. However, some minor variations in intonation are observed which are shown below: For example, /həm gao³jai-be/ 'I will go to the village' This is a simple statement of fact. The intonation changes, if this sentence is interrogative. In this sentence any item may be stressed according to the context and emphasis, which results in change of intonation.

a. Həm gao³jai-be?

b. Həm³gao³²jai-be¹

c. Həm¹gao³³jai-be²

d. Həm²gao³¹jai-be³

Of the above examples, sentence (a) is a question; whereas in sentences (b, c, d) there are emphases on /həm/ /gao³/ and /jai-be/ respectively.

XVI. Concluding remarks

In this study, a brief sketch of segmental phonology of Mithilanchal Urdu has been presented where in vowels and

consonants and their phonotactic behavior is described in detail. A brief discussion on suprasegmental features such as, stress, juncture and intonation has been presented as unique features of Mithilanchal Urdu.

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